(a) whether Government have set up free legal aid centres in the country particularly in the State of Punjab;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise/ District-wise; and

(c) if not, what steps are being taken by Government to bring about awareness among the people regarding their rights and enable them to get legal aid?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) and (b) Under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, as amended by Legal Services Authorities (Amendment) Act, 1994, Legal Services Authorities are to be constituted at Centre, State and District level and Legal Services Committee are to be constituted at the Supreme Court, High Court and Taluk level.

The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (excepting Chapter III which deal with the establishment of State Legal Services Authority, High Court Legal Services Committee, District Legal Services Authority and Taluk Legal Services Committee) has been enforced w.e.f. 9th Nov., 1995. The provisions of Chapter III of the said Act have so far been extended to 13 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and National Capital Territory of Delhi who have framed the Rules. The provisions of Chapter III of the Act are likely to be extended to the States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu soon.

In so far as the State of Punjab is concerned, the Legal Aid Centres have been set up at each District and Sub-Divisional Headquarters wherever a Judicial Officer is posted.

(c) Promotion of Legal Literacy is one of the approved strategic Legal Aid Programmes whereunder financial assistance to non-political registered social action groups is provided for organising Legal Literacy and Awareness Camps and for Training of Para Legals etc. for bringing about awareness among the people regarding their rights.

In order to bring about awareness amongst the people, Seminar/Para Legal Literacy Camps are being organised in the State of Punjab. Besides this, meetings of the Sarpanches Block-wise, had been conducted to apprise them of the Legal Aid Programmes and Free Legal Services being provided in the State of Punjab.

Voter's identity cards

1153. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal for production of identity cards by the voters at the election time has been done away with;

(b) if so, the reasons therefore; and

(c) if not, the action taken for strict compliance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Election Commission's view is that the scheme of Photo Identity Cards needs to be continued and issue of defect free identity cards to all registered electors be completed as soon as possible. With this in view, the Commission is contemplating further improvements in the scheme.

Omission of section 77 of the RPA

1154. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chief Electoral Officers have demanded that section 77 of the Representation of people Act should be omitted; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) and (b) The Election Commission has made a proposal for deletion of Explanation-I under section 77(1) of the Representation of the people Act, 1951 and for simultaneous upward revision of the ceilings on election expenses and this proposal is included amongst the proposals on electoral reforms which are being discussed with political parties. The Election Commission has, however, neither demanded omission of section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 nor the same is under consideration of the Government.